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Summary of Community Conversations in West Roxbury

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The following is a summary of some of the main points of participants in Boston 400's community meetings in West Roxbury. These ideas do not constitute a planning document or a community consensus, but rather an overview of the many options and how these options fit into the larger community context. This summary offers points of discussion for the development of a citywide plan. These ideas will be presented to the public in the form of a tabloid publication, which will be distributed widely, and in open forums to be announced at a later date. Please direct suggestions for further development of this summary to Lynn Berkley at the Boston Redevelopment Authority by phone (617-722-4300, extension 4338), fax (617-367-6087), email (lynn.berkley.bra@ci.boston.ma.us), or mail (Boston 400, Boston Redevelopment Authority, One City Hall Square, Boston, MA 02201). For more information about Boston 400, visit our web site (www.ci.boston.ma.us/boston400/boston40.htm).

Business and Activity Centers

Focus Areas	Issues and Opportunities	Possible Responses	Neighborhood and City Context
Centre Street business district	The Centre Street business district is currently struggling to compete as a center of commercial activity as evidenced by several vacant storefronts. The area's design is automobile-oriented and feels dangerous to pedestrians and bicyclists. Also, the parking space supply may be inadequate to support the volume of shoppers arriving by car. The appearance of the area is in need of attention, particularly with respect to landscaping and "greening."	Improve Centre Street business district by creating an organizing force to coordinate streetscape design, enhance the appearance and legibility of the district, and support local business owners with information and marketing. Apply to become a City of Boston Main Streets business district. Redesign Centre Street to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists, improve the streetscape, add street trees and appropriate landscaping, and better serve local business automobile traffic.	Centre Street is a critical center of activity for residents of the West Roxbury neighborhood. All residents of the City of Boston deserve a well-developed, community-oriented center within which they have safe and convenient access to basic goods and services.
Spring Street business district	The Spring Street business district is an extension of the Centre Street business district, but it feels disconnected and uncoordinated.	Enhance physical connections between Spring Street and Centre Street businesses by consolidating parking and enhancing pedestrian routes throughout the area. Focus redesign efforts on a cohesive streetscape that encourages people to walk up and down the linear district. Enhance connections between Spring Street and the newly reconstructed Havey Beach bath house, activities along the Charles River, and the planned park at the Gardner Street site.	The park at the Gardner Street site and the newly renovated Charles River banks, park, and amenities will be destinations for people throughout the city and in neighboring towns. Supporting enterprises in the local business district and the new recreational sites can be mutually beneficial if the connections are properly cultivated.

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Access to goods and services	The neighborhood shopping district is not convenient for everyday shopping. The relationship between the parking lots and the street makes for difficult access throughout the business district. Many of the stores do not seem to be competitive in the marketplace, and there are many vacant storefronts.	Establish incentives to keep grocery stores and other basic goods and services providers in major activity centers such as the West Roxbury business district. Ensure that accessibility for pedestrians and the disabled is included in any redesign plans related to access to the district.	
Signage	Many signs in the neighborhood are not uniform or attractive. The variations make for an inconsistent feel to the business district and prevent the area from having a cohesive identity.	Develop a comprehensive signage initiative for the business district with design and lighting standards. Initiate a citywide signage initiative for orientation signs. Post signs that say "Entering the West Roxbury Neighborhood Business District."	

Spaces for Families and Children

Focus Areas	Issues and Opportunities	Possible Responses	Neighborhood and City Context
Joyce Kilmer Elementary School schoolyard (35 Baker Street)	The Kilmer schoolyard is all macadam without any grass or greenery. It is not a safe or inviting place for children to play during or outside of the school day. Many teachers drive to school and require parking spaces that tend to take away from play spaces.	Apply for funding from the Schoolyard Initiative. Establish incentive program to encourage Boston Public School teachers to use public transportation. Establish policy that removes liability from the Boston Public Schools for schoolyard use after hours and off season.	
West Roxbury Branch Library	Library hours are reduced for the summer when young students have more time.	Expand library hours during the summer and on the weekends. Reduce hours during the day when children are in school.	

Parks and Open Spaces

Focus Areas	Issues and Opportunities	Possible Responses	Neighborhood and City Context
Park at the Gardner Street landfill site	The development of the landfill into a park is an exciting opportunity.	Ensure that a comprehensive, multi-modal transportation plan is part of the park	

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	Transportation to the park may be difficult for children, pedestrians, and bicyclists, because of the VFW Parkway.	planning process.	
VFW Parkway	The sidewalks along the VFW Parkway are in disrepair and therefore dangerous for bicycles and strollers.	Reconstruct the sidewalks along the VFW Parkway. Balance the regular maintenance of the parkway to better manage the condition of the sidewalks.	This parkway is an important recreational connection between Boston's Emerald Necklace and the soon-to-be-developed park at the Gardner Street site.
Havey Beach	Metropolitan District Commission is currently fixing up Havey Beach and its bathhouse buildings.		
Potential bicycle path	A bike path is needed in the neighborhood for recreation and transportation. There are good parks in the area, but they need to be better connected for bicyclists and pedestrians. In addition, the green space needs to be better integrated into the neighborhood.		
Pocket parks / tot lots	Residents feel that there are not enough tot lots and small parks in West Roxbury.	Establish a citywide standard and/or goal for residential proximity to parks and open spaces, with particular attention to spaces suitable for children. Inventory possible locations for tot lots and small play spaces, and determine the appropriate locations for new play spaces in each neighborhood.	All residents should be within close proximity of a park for everyday use.
West Roxbury High School	The schoolyard at West Roxbury High School is not fully accessible to the public. The track is kept locked when not in use by students.	Open track and the rest of the property for use by neighborhood residents. Establish a management agreement between Boston Public Schools and BP&R for parks and recreational spaces that are owned by the BPS.	Schoolyards, like all public spaces and buildings, should be open and available for public use at all times.
Quarry	The approximately 110-acre quarry site is operational during litigation with the City of Boston Environmental Strike Team (contact: Kevin Joyce, 617-635-4925). The quarry exists in a conservation protection overlay zoning district. At	Establish a planning process when the site operator has ceased quarrying activities to determine the highest and best use for the property.	

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	some point, the quarry will be mined to the extent of its capacity, and the site will be available for development. Original plans from the early 1900's included extending the existing street grid and developing housing on the site. More recently, residents have suggested that the site might be appropriate for a golf course or other open space resource.		

Transportation

Focus Areas	Issues and Opportunities	Possible Responses	Neighborhood and City Context
Centre Street	Centre Street has a dangerous amount of traffic, an insufficient parking situation, and a design that makes it unsafe for many people who use the road (particularly pedestrians and bicyclists).	Centre Street and the surrounding area need to be the focus of a comprehensive transportation plan that aims to balance vehicular traffic (cars and buses) with bicycle and pedestrian traffic.	
Spring Street	Spring Street is poorly lit and lacking greenery.	Develop a comprehensive plan for the West Roxbury business district. Include streetscape elements are incorporated with emphases on safety and aesthetics.	
Grove Street / Washington Street	There is a need for improved MBTA service from the Washington Street area to Faulkner Hospital area. In addition, the streets are inadequately lit.	Ensure that all residents of the city have access to reliable public transportation.	
Parkway system (West Roxbury Parkway, VFW Parkway)	Parkway system works really well for cars in the West Roxbury area and it is a beautiful roadway. However, the paths and sidewalks along the parkways are in disrepair making it difficult for bicyclists and pedestrians.	Develop a multi-use strategy for management and design of the MDC Parkways.	
MBTA Commuter Rail service	The MBTA Commuter Rail's hours of operation are appropriate only for those commuting in and out of Downtown Boston. The weekend schedule is inconvenient. As a result people often	Develop strategies to make public transportation more accessible to residents of the neighborhoods farthest from Downtown Boston. Include considerations for weekend and special	

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	drive into Downtown instead of taking public transportation.	events for families and children.	
Pedestrian safety	Pedestrians do not feel safe walking around the busy streets in the neighborhood.	Implement traffic calming measures. Do a comprehensive transportation plan with a focus on pedestrian circulation.	
Streets and sidewalks	Many sidewalks in the neighborhood are in disrepair. Often the condition of the streets and sidewalks make it unsafe for the elderly, the disabled, or the very young. Road and utility work should be better coordinated to preserve the condition of the pavement on the roads.	Conduct an inventory of the conditions of the City's streets and sidewalks. Include in the inventory information about the roadway, utilities, street trees, sidewalks, crosswalks, benches, streetlights, and other street amenities and essentials. Determine a schedule for redesign and/or reconstruction based upon that inventory.	
Public transportation within West Roxbury	There are many public transportation routes through West Roxbury, but there is no way to get around to all of the different sections of the neighborhood.	Establish a "loop bus" route that travels around the edges of the neighborhood.	A loop bus route would connect people to parks, shopping districts, and other residential neighborhoods.

Housing and Residential Development

Focus Areas	Issues and Opportunities	Possible Responses	Neighborhood and City Context
Housing for the elderly	Residents have voiced concerns that there is not enough affordable housing for the elderly in West Roxbury.	Determine a strategy for developing affordable housing for older people of all income levels. Establish policy recommendations that take into account the growing percentage of the population that is older than age 65 (by 2010 approximately 25% of the population will be over 65 years old). Pursue opportunities to develop pilot projects that include housing for elderly among "family housing" to facilitate intermingling of people of all ages.	
DPW site on Laurie Avenue			

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Cultural and Historic Connections

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